

Spirits Refreshed

By Éclair



The eventful harried morning of the last day of an eventful harried year saw my partner and I travel in the stifling summer heat to arrive at Le Chateau Naturiste in the early afternoon. We were there to surprise my oldest and dearest friend to celebrate New Year's Eve together. This was a scheme conjured up by Le Chateau's charming proprietors and hosts Stuart and Lucia, who certainly do pull out all the stops to ensure that their guests' stay is a memorable one!

Le Chateau Naturiste is a place where the slogan certainly lives up to its promise, *Free your mind, Free your body, Refresh your spirit.*

It was while sitting by the lagoon style pool set among a delightful grove of palms and frangipani and watched over by nothing more than majestic Gynea Lilies

within the stunning surrounding bush, that my mind finally arrived home within my skin and I was transported to a place of total calm. No longer fretting about the past or worrying about the future but fully immersed in the glorious present.

A delicious seafood dinner on the terrace overlooking the impossibly blue water beneath a glowing sky was the perfect beginning to the most magnificent New Year's Eve Celebration. It was only the distant hum of the cicadas and the distinct grey-green of the encircling eucalypts that indicated that we were in fact in Australia and not in a Villa on the Mediterranean or Riviera. Though the evening was not without its European influences...

The party was themed 'A Night at the Opera'. Fancy dress for the undressed is a curious concept. Old friends and new were bedecked, bejewelled and bewigged in nothing more than glittering jewellery, top hats, gloves and flowing organza capes - with the gentlemen sporting their obligatory bow ties. Our hosts resembled French royalty of a bygone era. How appropriate - The Sun King and his Consort themselves presiding over the opulent festivities at the Chateau!

2013 was welcomed in with a view of the fireworks over Port Stephens and toasted with a glass of the cheekily named 'Skinny Dip Sparkling' from a local winery. The Opera theme continued the following day in that New Year's Day is

the sounding note that sets the tone for the rest of the year.

Our day was spent deep in relaxation by the pool enjoying the crystal clear water. Should we had felt more energetic or the weather had not been as "insanely spectacular" to quote my friend, our options were astounding: tennis on the competition sized court, billiards, exercising in the gym, enjoying the indoor spa and sauna or perusing the library which is a veritable archive of naturist material dating from the 1960's to the present.

The evening saw us all gather for Happy Hour on the terrace, which continued on to a delicious shared meal, great conversation in the bar/billiard room surrounded by Stuart and Lucia's magnificent collection of Norman Lindsay artworks. And of course, it was all finished off by yet another swim, this time by moonlight underneath a canopy of stars.

Much has been said about feeling the warmth of the summer sun and an evening breeze on one's skin unencumbered by clothing. There is also so much more to be said, where mere words prove inadequate, about another feeling of warmth that comes from true generous hearted hospitality, the blessing of friendship and the creation of unforgettable memories.

Thank you again to Lucia and Stuart of Le Chateau Naturiste for your kindness and friendship and a blissful retreat to begin 2013!

